MARVEL
PSR 34

WINICK

CALAFIORE

MCKENNA

EXILES™

A SECOND FAREWELL
2 OF 2

FEISTER & HARRIS

12 MILES OUTSIDE OF LAS VEGAS, NEVADA...

9:47 P.M.

BLOOONK!

Two companions.

Two team members.

Two *friends.*

TWO EXILES

Uuhhh...did **that** ever suck... that was the **worst** world-hopping ride we've ever had!

It was like a **Fellini film,** only less linear...

Yeah...

I wanna throw up... but I just don't have the **energy**...or the **enthusiasm**...

...you really need **both** when you're gonna ralph, y'know.

Yeah...

How are **you** feeling, Mariko? You were becoming a **vampire** just about ten minutes ago...that's really gotta **kick** a girl's butt...

Yeah...

You're not firing on all eight cylinders, are you?

Yeah...

Thought so. Well, gang, looks like our favorite firecracker could use a few days at the **spa.** I volunteer to accompany-- **gang?**

Hey, Mariko...when was the last time we ever **teleported** and weren't within, um, let's say, **ten feet** of the other Exiles?

Never, TJ.

Right. Baby, I think we got troubles. We're separated from the pack. Hellooooo! Mimic! Heather!

MOOOOORPH!

Not calling for Illyana?

I was kinda hoping we lost her.

How can you even...see anything, TJ? There's barely any...any moonlight.

I can see in the dark, sweetie. Remember?

Oh yeah. Not a Mensa member at the moment.

But utilizing a lot of alliteration nonetheless.

I was?

Mensa member at the moment.

Terrific time to talk in tongue twisters.

Brain hurts. Legs humor.

Human meat...

Whu--?! Aw, crap!

Mariko-- get up!

UP!

We're back on the *Legacy Planet* with the stinking *VI-LOCKS!*

It was a world ravaged by the mutant-killing disease known as the *Legacy Virus.*

One of the afflicted was the New Mutant *Doug Ramsey,* otherwise known as *Cypher.*

His best friend, the organic technological alien-being *Warlock,* had hoped to cure Doug by bonding his circuitry to Ramsey's infected flesh.

The result was *disastrous.* It turned Doug into a cyber-zombie with the ability to *infect* any other creature with whom it made *contact.*

Within five years, 75 percent of the planet would become *Vi-Locks,* power-mad beasts bent on ridding the world of *humanity.*

The Exiles saved this world several weeks ago by summoning the *Gods of Asgard.* With the gods' powerful blood, a *vaccine* was created that reversed the effects of the Vi-Lock virus.

But apparently *everyone* hasn't gotten their shots yet.

Human meat-- will--will--infect-infect-infect--**join** with human meat***

Sunfire! On your feet! We need to get out of here ASAP!

BROOK

BROOK

These techno refugees from *Night of the Living Dead* are still pumping--along with their *nastiness!*

CREEK.

CREEK.

Don't wanna go to a techno club, TJ. Too *tired.*

Mariko, time to snap the crap *out* of it and get ready for *school!*

We've gone through *too much* to buy the farm in a *repeat!* We already cleared this video game level and moved on! *Get up!*

Aw--*nuts!* There's *more* of them!

Mariko--we've gone *code red!* Get your butt off the ground and start *frying!*

MARIKO!

COOSH!

COOSH!

COOSH!

BA-COOO

OOM

Well, it's about *time,* ya big drama queen! We were about a *nanosecond* away from being assimilated right into the *Borg,* hot pants!

Whoa! *WHOA!* Mariko, are you okay?

You're losing altitude *fast!*

NO--that-- that took out *everything*-- I--I--

Set us *down*, kiddo! Just stay sharp for a *few* more seconds! We're *too high* up for me to--

MARIKOOO!

Can't-- can't--

MARIKOOO!

Mariko?

Mariko?

Ow... *migraine... big* one...

Yeah, well, that would be *my* fault, in the sense that I saved us from falling to our *deaths!*

I had to *possess* your body and fly us down to the ground! I was afraid I might kill you in your weakened state.

Instead it just knocked you out for 32 hours.

It's good to see you again, Mariko.

Dr. Pym? Are we back on *your* world-- the Legacy Planet?

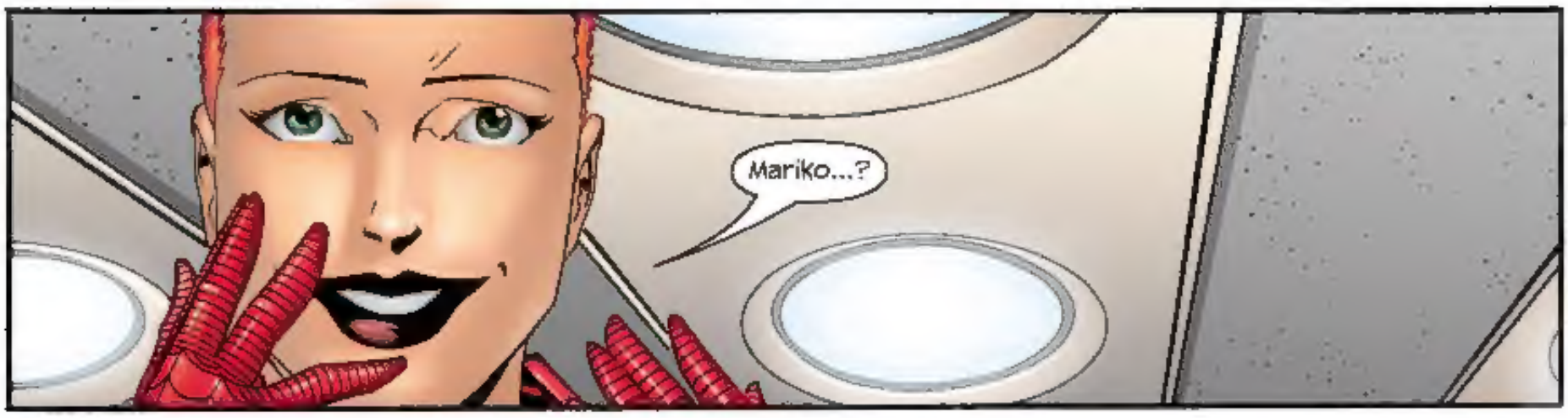
She catches up fast.

Yep. The long and the short of it is that we're doing *great.* We've inoculated nearly *eighty* percent of the infected populace.

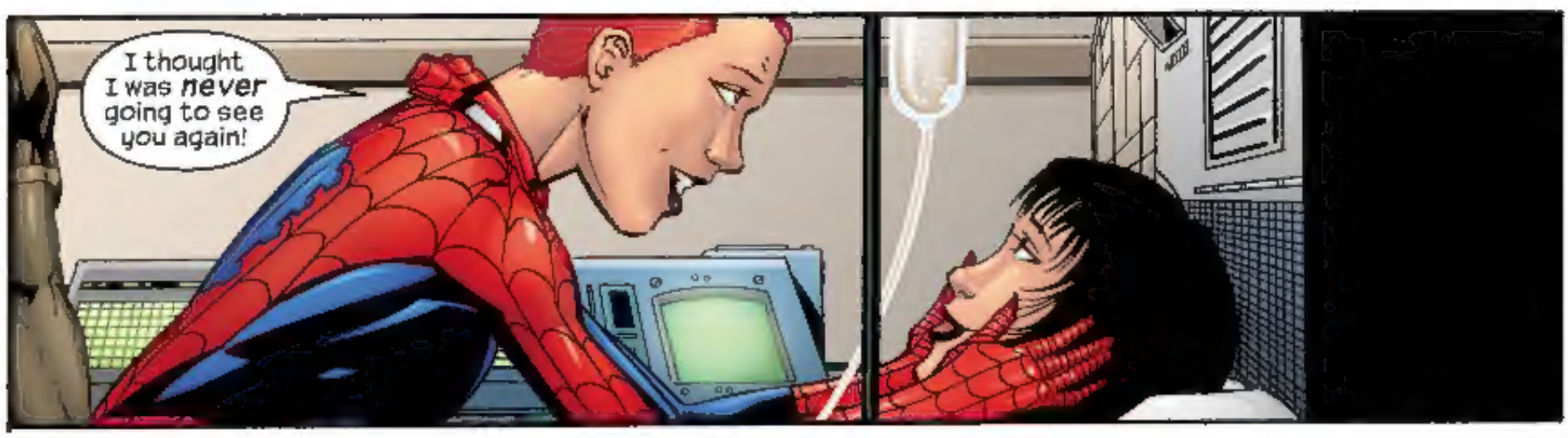
We've had some rebel outbreaks here and there. You kids ran into a Vi-Lock *raiding party* making an--

Is she *awake?!* I heard a radio dispatch from the nurse's station that said she was waking up!

You were *supposed* to page me the *minute*--


Mariko...?

Hey, Mary.


I thought I was *never* going to see you again!

You *weren't* going to see me again.
I *know.* That's what I said. Mostly. I pretty much said that.

You look *great.*

I look like *hell.*

No-- you look great.

I was almost transformed into a *vampire* and I have two days worth of *bed-head.*

Seems to suit you.

Okay... we're gonna *go.*

Hey, Doc, you and I could sit here and fire off *semiautomatic weapons* and I don't think these two would notice.

Well, we have a *gun range* for that.

You're not big on the *jokes,* hun?

Not especially, no.

I *really* thought I'd never see you again.

You already *said* that.

It doesn't make it any less *true*

You do look *so* great

Not as great as *you.*

9 DAYS LATER...

As near as we can tell, there hasn't been *another* energy signature that's in any way *similar* to the one emitted from your teleportation, TJ...

So, we're *nowhere*

Not *quite*. I'm still reviewing all the data from the satellite imaging taken one week prior to your entry back on our world and up to today

I may find something to *explain* the anomaly.

So, we're nowhere.

Well .. in a word, *yes*.

You may have to *accept* your presence here for a while

I should remind you that you do seem to be under the *physical thrall* of whatever forces are driving your journey

Neither you nor Mariko are *aging*. Your bodies function in every other way, but *without* decay.

I truly believe that you *will* be returned to your path as an *Exile*.

Make the best of it

I know someone *else* is.

Thanks, Dr. McCoy

When did you know?

Know *what*?

That you were *different*?

Oh, well...it all hit me a few *hours* after I discovered that I had super powers. I told you this before.

No, not *that*.

When did you know... y'know, that you were *gay*?

Oh...always. *Always.*

I can't remember a time when I *wasn't*.

I had this *massive* crush on my first-grade teacher. I kept telling people that I was going to *marry* her.

I was still young enough that it was considered *cute*.

But it set off a few *warning flares* to my folks.

How about you?

When I was *thirteen* I fell in love with my best friend.

That's *sweet*

It wasn't.

I told her. I thought she felt the same way.

But it's okay. I'm over it.

Are you?

No. But it helps to say I am

What happened?

She told her parents

They told *mine*.

My parents sent me to another school.

I never saw her again

Mariko...

Oh, it's *okay*. I was thirteen. It was a *long* time ago. I was a kid.

I'm over it.

Are you?

No. But it helps to say that I am.

12 DAYS LATER...

That was *nice work*, people. It was a small nest of Vi-Locks, but a pretty *rabid* bunch nonetheless.

I was glad that we were able to subdue them all *without harm*.

It's always nice having one of the *gods* tagging along to take care of business with the circuit heads.

Luke, do we have to run back up as they begin the *vaccination phase*?

Nah, you guys have had a *full morning*. Team Beta will handle security. Hit the showers. See you at the noon briefing.

You want to grab some food?

Jack, *gross*. I'm *covered* in Vi-Lock gunk! Not *all* of us can toast off the unsightly messiness of battle.

How about I grab a few things from the cafeteria and bring them back to the room?

Now you're talking. And not just all that fruit and granola crap. I want to see some *pastries* and some things covered in *syrup!*

2 DAYS LATER...

What are you *talking* about?

I'm just saying that you should be *careful.*

It'll all be harder *later.*

I *know* that, TJ

Do you? It doesn't look to *me* like you do.

We can't do *anything* about teleporting out of here, so what's the harm?

What's the *harm...?* If this is just some *fling* to you, then you're *way* out of line. She's falling in *love* with you, Mariko...if you can't--

Fling? Get lost! *Fling.* I'm sorry you're so *uncomfortable* with me and Mary, TJ, but it's really none of your business!

You're going to get *hurt!* Both you *and* her. This *won't* end well. The longer it goes on, the *worse* it will be when it's over.

Who says it has to *end*?

It will. I'm just hoping it doesn't end with us getting thrown back to our homes *without* finishing our tasks

That leaves me with my grandmother *killing* my dad, and you stuck in a mutant containment facility *exploding* with radiation.

Or it may just end with us *moving on*. And you leaving behind someone you *love*.

And believe me, I *know* what that's like...

...more than *anyone*.

4 DAYS LATER...

Why *here*, Mary? *This* is your favorite spot n all the world?

I didn't say *all* the world, Mariko. I said in the *city*.

But you guys have access to all *kinds* of videos, DVDs and such. You can watch movies anytime you want!

But where s the fun in *that*? This is a *movie theater*. You come in, you sit in seats

You get that ungodly *muck* on your shoes--

Trying to have a *moment* here

Sorry

The lights go down, the music starts--

And you watch 20 minutes of tra ers and commercials .

You're *really* ruining this.

Okay, I'll shut up.

No...I know it's *corny*...but I *like* going to the movies. My dad used to take me.

It's ,ust... *comforting*.

I *missed* it

So, I had Doc Ock fix this place up

Even the popcorn machine.

I know I'm a *dork*

POP-IT

No. ..you're *beautiful*

What? What's wrong?

I heard what you and TJ were talking about last week. About us getting too... *involved*

And?

I'm not *sure* that she's wrong

She *is.*

Mariko, we should try and be *realistic.*

Why?

We shouldn't make this any *harder* than it's going to be.

And how are we going to do *that?* Take *separate rooms?*

Have Pym put us on *different squads?* Stop *talking* to each other?

Mariko..

I'm *not* giving this up. Do you *understand* me? I'm *not.*

Please, just--

NO! Mary, *NO!* I'm not going to do it!

You *can't* make me! I *won't!*

Mary, in *all* that I've told you about me..

...my past... my parents .. my life...

...has any of t...any *small bit* of it.. seemed *happy?*

It *hasn't* been *None* of it. And it wasn't just *one* thing

It wasn't about being *gay*, or a *mutant*, or being *disowned*, or never finding...never finding a *place* in the world

it was *all* of it

The happ est I have *ever* been , in my *whole* life.. is right *now*... here with *you*.

And if you ove me at *all*...you won't try and take that *away* from me

If it lasts 50 years or *ten more minutes*... I'm *not* giving any of it up.

Please don t .Mary.. *please*...

I won't

Good, 'cause I'm *a lot* stronger than you and it would have been *messy*.

Shut up.

I will *not* shut up. *You're* the one who tried to break up.

Shut up.

Okay...

13 DAYS, 4 HOURS AND 33 MINUTES LATER...

He just *doesn't* have to act like such a *jackass!* Just give the order, I don't need the *topspin!*

He's not himself yet. At least I *assume* he's not. Where I'm from, Captain America is a *heck* of a lot more *patient.*

I'm guessing *this* one may still be getting his sea legs back after being a *Vi-Lock* for over a year.

If he isn't in top form then he shouldn't be in the *field!* And he *definitely* shouldn't be *leading* a squad!

Yeah, but even a *Mr. Cranky Pants* Cap is better than just about *anyone* else.

I *know.* But he's a *jerk.*

Stop trying to cheer me up.

A *star-spangled* jerk.

I'm *not.* You're cute when you're angry.

I'm going to *blow off* the debriefing and take a bath.

Cap will be *so* annoyed.

God, I hope so.

Should I use the *jasmine* or the lavender?

I used up all the *lavender...*

That's the *last* of the lavender I had, missy! I'm going to have to raid the *Bellaggio Hotel* again to get more.

Y'know, there's whole *scores* of clothing stores I haven't even looted yet.

Icegirl and I cleaned out *most* of the hipper stores, but we never touched the *formal* stuff. I thought we might go out and grab a few *slinkier* numbers.

BULLLLLLLL

And Doc Pym has been loosening up on the idea of us actually having a *party*.

BLINK!!

I can't remember the last time I went out dancing. *Real* dancing. In a club where it's *loud* and you have to *yell* to be heard. *That* kind of going out dancing...

CLUMP!

Mariko?

Mariko?

The energy signatures are *identical* to the ones we detected when they teleported in.

I'm *certain* that they both leaped to their next destination.

Whatever caused them to return here *righted itself* and put them back on course.

Are you sure that...that they're not *hurt?*

All I can say for certain is what I've already told you.

They're *gone.*

Mary? Are you *alright?*

Sure.

Are you?

No. But it helps to say that I am.

END